

Amendment
Application No. 10/576,192
Attorney Docket No. 062412

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 5-16 are pending. Claims 1 and 4-6 are amended and new claims 7-16 are added. Claims 2 and 3 are canceled.

The specification has been amended to correct minor informalities noted upon applicants' review.

Claims 1 and 5/1 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Murata. This rejection has been rendered moot by the present amendment which incorporates the features of claim 3 into claim 1.

Claims 1-4 and 6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nishimura et al. in view of Shirai. Favorable reconsideration of this rejection is earnestly solicited.

As noted by the Examiner, Nishimura et al. discloses that a retainer may be interposed between the rollers to reduce frictional forces. Nishimura et al. does not specifically disclose the configuration of the retainer. Shirai is applied by the Examiner for its disclosure of a spacer for a linear movement device. The Examiner argues that it would have been obvious to modify Nishimura et al. to employ a spacer as taught by Shirai.

The claims have been amended to clearly distinguish over the combination of prior art. In particular, even if the references are combined as suggested by the Examiner, the combination does not teach or suggest the presently claimed invention.

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Claim 1 has been amended to include the features of claims 2 and 3 as well as to specify that the axes of a pair of adjacent rollers are perpendicular to each other as viewed from a roller advancing direction.

Claim 4 has been amended to incorporate the features of claims 3 and 4. The cited art does not teach or suggest the features that an intersecting portion of the concave portion of the spacer and a surrounding surface portion of the spaces except the concave portion is chamfered so as to perform a smooth circulation of the spacer.

It is respectfully submitted that the amended claims clearly distinguish over the cited art.

Claim 5/3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nishimura et al. and Shirai and further in view of Murata. Murata fails to provide the teachings which Nishimura et al. and Shirai lack. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the amended claims distinguish over the prior art.

New claim 7 is added which is characterized by providing lubricant holding grooves formed on the surface of the spacer. New independent claim 8 has been added which specifies that the return member includes a roller return passage at a central portion thereof which is twisted. New dependent claims 9-16 are added to set forth further features of the invention.

For at least the foregoing reasons, the claimed invention distinguishes over the cited art and defines patentable subject matter. Favorable reconsideration is earnestly solicited.

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Should the Examiner deem that any further action by applicants would be desirable to place the application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone applicants' undersigned attorney.

If this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment: Amendment Transmittal